

CONSECRATION TO GOD—ILLUSTRATED
BY ABRAHAM'S CIRCUMCISION
NO. 845

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him,
I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be you perfect. And I will make my covenant
between me and you and will multiply you exceedingly.”*
Genesis 17:1-2.

WE COMMENCED our exposition of the life of Abram with his calling, when he was brought out of Ur of the Chaldees and separated unto the Lord in Canaan. We then passed on to his justification, when he believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, and now you will bear with us if we continue in the same subject to a further stage and attempt to describe the fuller development of Abram's vital godliness in the open and clear revelation of his consecration to God. In the chapter before us we see his sanctification unto the Lord, his ordination to service, and purification as a vessel fitted for the Master's use. All the called are justified, and all the justified are by a work of the Holy Ghost sanctified and made fit to be afterwards glorified with Christ Jesus.

Let me remind you of the order in which these blessings come. If we should speak of sanctification or consecration, it is not as a first thing, but as an elevation to be reached only by preceding stepping stones. In vain do men pretend to be consecrated to God before they are called of God's Spirit, such have yet to be taught that no strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright. They must learn what this means, “You must be born again,” for assuredly until men are brought into spiritual life by effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, all their talk about serving God may be answered in the words of Joshua, “You cannot serve the Lord.”

I speak of consecration, but it is not as a first thing, nor even as a second thing, for a man must be justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, or he will not possess the grace which is the root of all true sanctity, for sanctification grows out of faith in Jesus Christ. Remember, holiness is a flower, not a root, it is not sanctification that saves, but salvation that sanctifies. A man is not saved by his holiness, but he becomes holy because he is already saved. Being justified by faith, and having peace with God, he walks no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and in the power of the blessing which he has received by grace he dedicates himself to the service of his gracious God. Note then the due order of heavenly benefits, consecration to God follows calling and justification.

Recalling your minds to Abram's history, let me remind you that thirteen years had elapsed after the time in which God had said that Abram's faith was counted to him for righteousness, and those thirteen years, so far as we can gather from Scripture, were not at all so full of brave faith and noble deeds as we might have expected them to have been. How sure is that truth that the best of men are but men at the best, for that very man who had accepted God's promise and had not staggered at it through unbelief, within a few months afterwards, or perhaps a few days, was taken with a fit of unbelief, and at the instigation of his wife, adopted means which were not justifiable, in order that he might obtain the promised heir.

He used means which may not be so vicious to him, as they would be in men of modern times, but which were suggested by an unbelieving policy, and were fraught with evil. He takes Hagar to wife. He could not leave it to God to give him the promised seed, he could not leave it with God to fulfill His promise in His own time, but justifies himself in turning aside from the narrow path of faith to

accomplish by doubtful methods the end which God Himself had promised and undertaken to accomplish.

How shorn of splendor is Abram seen when we read of him, “and Abram hearkened unto the voice of Sarai!” That business of Hagar is to the patriarch's deep discredit, and reflects no honor at all upon either him or his faith. Look at the consequences of his unbelieving procedure! Misery soon followed. Hagar despises her mistress, Sarai throws all the blame on her husband, the poor bondwoman is so hardly dealt with that she flees from the household. How much of real cruelty may be meant by the term “dealing hardly,” I cannot tell, but one marvels that such a man as Abram allowed one who had been brought into such a relationship with him, to be heedlessly chased from his house while in a condition requiring care and kindness.

We admire the truthfulness of the Holy Spirit that He has been pleased to record the faults of the saints without extenuating them. Biographies of good men in Scripture are written with unflinching integrity, their evil recorded as well as their good. These faults are not written that we may say, “Abraham did so-and-so, therefore we may do it.” No, brethren, the lives of these good men are warnings to us as well as examples, and we are to judge them as we should judge ourselves, by the laws of right and wrong. Abram did wrong both in taking Hagar to wife and in allowing her to be badly used.

In after years the child of the bond woman mocked the child of the free woman, and an expulsion of both mother and child was needful. There was deep sorrow in Abram's heart, a bitterness not to be told. Polygamy, though tolerated under the Old Testament, was never approved, it was only endured because of the hardness of men's hearts. It is evil, only evil, and that continually. In the family relationship there can be opened no more abundant and fruitful source of misery to the sons of men than want of chastity to the marriage bond made with one wife, disguise that unchastity by what name you will. All these thirteen years, so far as Scripture informs us, Abram had not a single visit from his God. We do not find any record of his either doing anything memorable or having so much as a single audience with the Most High. Learn from this, that if we once forsake the track of simple faith, once cease to walk according to the purity which faith approves, we strew our path with thorns, cause God to withhold the light of His countenance from us, and pierce ourselves through with many sorrows.

But mark, beloved, the exceeding grace of God. The way to recover Abram from his backsliding was that the Lord should appear to him, and consequently, we read in our text that at ninety-nine years of age Abram was favored with a further visit from the Most High. This brings to my remembrance the words in the Book of Revelation concerning the church in Laodicea, “You are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth”—a very solemn declaration, but what follows? “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me,” which means just this, that for recovery out of a horrible state of languishing and lukewarmness there is no remedy but the coming of Jesus Christ to the soul in near and dear intercourse. Truly it was so with Abram. The Lord would bring him out of his state of distrust and distance into one of high dignity and sanctity, and He does it by manifesting Himself to him, for the Lord talked with Abram—

*“Midst darkest shades, if He appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And He my rising sun.”*

Breathe a prayer, my brethren and sisters. “Lord, reveal Yourself to my poor backsliding, languishing spirit. Revive me, O Lord, for one smile from You can make my wilderness blossom as the rose.”

On the occasion of this gracious manifestation, God was pleased to do for Abram what I think is to us an admirable and instructive illustration of the consecration of our redeemed spirits entirely to His

service. I shall, this morning, as God may help me, first lead you to observe *the model of the consecrated life*, secondly, *the nature of the higher life*, and thirdly, *its results*.

I. First, then, let us notice in the words of God to Abram, **THE MODEL OF THE SANCTIFIED OR CONSECRATED LIFE.**

Here it is: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be you perfect." For a man to be thoroughly sanctified to the Master's service, he must first *realize the almightiness and all-sufficiency and glory of God*.

Brethren, the God whom we serve fills all things, and has all power and all riches. If we think little of Him we shall render little trust to Him, and consequently little obedience, but if we have grand conceptions of the glory of God, we shall learn to confide in Him most thoroughly, we shall receive mercies from Him most plentifully, and we shall be moved to serve Him most consistently.

Sin, at the bottom of it, very frequently has its origin in low thoughts of God. Take Abram's sin, he could not see how God could make him the father of many nations when Sarai was old and barren. Hence his error with Hagar. But if he had remembered what God now brings to his recollection, that God is El Shaddai, the all-sufficient One, he would have said, "No, I will remain true to Sarai, for God can effect His own purposes without my taking tortuous means to accomplish them. He is all-sufficient in Himself, and not dependent upon creature strength. I will patiently hope, and quietly wait to see the fulfillment of the Master's promises."

Now, as with Abram, so with you, my brethren and sisters. When a man is in business difficulties, if he believes that God is all-sufficient to carry him through them, he will not practice any of the common tricks of trade, nor degenerate into that shiftiness which is so usual among commercial men. If a man believes, being poor, that God is a sufficient portion for him, he will not grow envious of the rich or discontented with his condition. The man who feels that God is an all-sufficient portion for his spirit, will not look for pleasure in the pursuits of vanity, he will not go with the giddy multitude after their vain mirth. "No," says he, "God has appeared unto me as God all-sufficient for my comfort and my joy. I am content as long as God is mine. Let others drink from broken cisterns if they will, I dwell by the overflowing fountain, and am perfectly content."

O beloved, what glorious names our Lord deservedly wears! Whichever of His names you choose to dwell upon for a moment, what a mine of wealth and meaning it opens up to you! Here is this name, "El Shaddai," "El," that is, "the strong one," for infinite power dwells in JEHOVAH. How readily may we who are weak become mighty if we draw upon Him! And then, "Shaddai," that is to say, "the unchangeable, the invincible." What a God we have then, who knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning, against whom none can stand! "El," strong, "Shaddai," unchangeable in His strength, always therefore strong in every time of need, ready to defend His people, and able to preserve them from all their foes.

Come, Christian, with such a God as this why need you abase yourself to win the good word of the wicked man? why gad you abroad to find earthly pleasures where the roses are always mixed with thorns? Why need you to put your confidence in gold and silver, or in the strength of your body, or in aught that is beneath the moon? You have El Shaddai to be yours. Your power to be holy will much depend upon your grasping with all the intensity of your faith the cheering fact that this God is your God forever and ever, your daily portion, your all-sufficient consolation. You dare not, can not, will not, wander into the ways of sin when you know that such a God is your Shepherd and Guide.

Following up this model of the consecrated life, notice the next words—"walk before me." This is the style of life which characterizes true holiness, it is a walking before God. Ah! brethren, Abram had walked before Sarai, he had paid undue respect to her views and wishes, he had walked, too, in the sight of his own eyes and the inclinations of his own heart when he was allied to Hagar, but now the Lord gently rebukes him with the exhortation, "Walk before me." It is remarkable that on the former divine visit to the patriarch (which we tried to interpret last Lord's-day), the Lord's message was "Fear not." He was then, as it were, but a child in spiritual things and the Lord gave him comfort, for he needed it.

He is now grown into a man, and the exhortation is practical and full of activity—"walk." The Christian man is to put out and use the strength and grace which he has received. The pith of the exhortation lies in the last words, "*Walk before me,*" by which I understand a habitual sense of the presence of God, or doing the right thing and shunning the wrong, out of respect to the will of God, a consideration of God in all actions, public and private. Brethren, I deeply regret when I see Christian men, even in religious societies, in their calculations leaving out the greatest item in the whole calculation—namely, the divine element, the divine power and faithfulness.

Of the most of mankind I may say, without being censorious, that if there were no God their course of action would not be different from what it is, for they do not feel themselves either restrained or compelled by any sense of the divine presence. "The transgression of the wicked says within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

But this is the mark of the truly sanctified man of God, that he lives in every place as standing in the presence chamber of the divine Majesty, he acts as knowing that the eye which never sleeps are always fixed on him. His heart's desire is that he may never do the wrong thing, because he has respect to worldly greatness, and may never forget the right thing, because he is in evil company, but may reckon that God being everywhere, he is always in company where it would be impudent rebellion to sin. The saint feels that he must not, dare not, transgress, because he is before the very face of God. This is the model of the sanctified character, for a man to realize what the Lord is, and then to act as in the immediate presence of a holy and jealous God.

The next words are, "*and be you perfect.*" Brethren, does this mean absolute perfection? I shall not controvert the belief of some, that we may be absolutely perfect on earth. Freely do I admit that the model of sanctification is perfection. It were inconsistent with the character of God for Him to give us any other than a perfect command, and a perfect standard. No law but that of absolute perfection could come from a perfect God, and to give us a model that were not absolutely perfect, were to ensure to us superabundant imperfections, and to give us an excuse for them. God sets before His servants no rule of this kind, "Be as good as you can," but this, "Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Has any man ever attained to it? Truly we have not, but for all that, every Christian man aims at it. I would far rather my child had a perfect copy to write by, though he might never write equal to it, than that he should have an imperfect copy set before him, because then he would never make a good writer at all. Our heavenly Father has given us the perfect image of Christ to be our example, His perfect law to be our rule, and it is for us to aim at this perfection in the power of the Holy Spirit, and like Abram, to fall upon our faces in shame and confusion of face, when we recollect how far we have come short of it.

Perfection is what we wish for, pant after, and shall at the last obtain. We do not want to have the law toned down to our weakness. Blessed be God, we delight in the perfection of that law. We say with Paul, "The law is holy, and just, and good, but I am carnal, sold under sin." The will of God is that which we would be conformed unto, and if we who are believers had but one wish, and it could be granted to us at once, it should be this, to make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight.

However, the word, "perfect," as I have said, bears commonly the meaning of "upright," or "sincere"—"*walk before me, and be you sincere.*" No double dealing must the Christian man have, no playing fast and loose with God or man, no hypocritical professions, or false principles. He must be as transparent as glass, he must be a man in whom there is no guile, a man who has cast aside deceit in every shape, who hates it, and loathes it, and walks before God, who sees all things with absolute sincerity, earnestly desiring in all things, both great and small, to commend himself to the conscience of others as in the sight of the Most High.

Brethren, here is the model of the consecrated life. Do you long to attain it? I am sure every soul that is moved by God's grace will do so. But if your feeling about it is like mine, it will be just that of Abram in the text, "Abram fell on his face before the Lord." For oh, how far short we have come of this! We

have not always thought of God as all-sufficient, we have been unbelieving. We have doubted Him here, and doubted Him there. We have not gone to work in this world as if we believed the promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." We have not been satisfied to suffer, or to be poor, and we have not been content to do His will without asking questions. We might often have had addressed to us the rebuke, "Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? Is his arm shortened at all? Is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear?"

Brethren, we have not always walked before the Lord. If one may speak for the rest, we do not always feel the presence of God as a check to us. There are angry words perhaps at the table, there is wrong-doing in the place of business, there are carelessness, worldliness, pride, and I know not what beside of evil to mar the day's labor, and when we come back at night we have to confess, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, I have forgotten my Shepherd's presence. I have not always spoken and acted as if I felt that You were always looking upon me." Thus it has come to pass that we have not been perfect.

I feel ready to laugh, not the laugh of Abram, but that of thorough ridicule, when I hear people talk about their being absolutely perfect. They must be of very different flesh and blood from us, or rather they must be great fools, full of conceit, and utterly ignorant of themselves, for if they did but look at a single action, they would find specks in it, and if they examined but one single day, they would perceive something in which they fell short, if there were nothing in which they had transgressed. You see your model, brethren, study it in the life of Christ, and then press forward to it with the zeal of the apostle who said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

II. Secondly, THE NATURE OF THIS CONSECRATION as illustrated in this chapter. On each point briefly.

Genuine spiritual consecration begins with communion with God. Note the third verse—"Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him." By looking at Christ Jesus, His image is photographed upon our mind, and we are changed from glory to glory, as by the presence of the Lord. Distance from God's presence always means sin, holy familiarity with God engenders holiness. The more you think of God, the more you meditate upon His works, the more you praise Him, the more you pray to Him, the more constantly you talk with Him, and He with you, by the Holy Ghost, the more surely are you upon the road to thorough consecration to His cause.

The next point in the nature of this consecration is that *it is fostered by enlarged views of the covenant of grace.* Read on, "As for me, behold my covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations." This is said to help Abram to walk before God and to be perfect, from which we conclude that to grow in sanctification, a man should increase in knowledge, and also in the tenacity of the faith which grasps the covenant which God has made with Christ for His people, which is, "Ordered in all things and sure." With your Bibles open, notice attentively that Abram was refreshed as to *his own personal interest in the covenant.* Note the second personal pronoun, how it is repeated, "As for me, behold, my covenant is with *you*, and *you* shall be a father of many nations." Take the sixth verse, "I will make *you* exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of *you*, and kings shall come out of *you*. And I will establish my covenant between me and *you*, and your seed after *you* . . . to be a God unto *you*, and to your seed after *you*."

Thus Abram has the covenant brought home to himself, he is made to feel that he has a part and a lot therein. If you are ever to be sanctified unto God's service, you must get a full assurance of your interest in all the covenant provisions. Doubts are like wild boars of the wood, which tear up the flowers of sanctification in the garden of the heart, but when you have in your soul a God-given assurance of your interest in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, then shall the foxes which spoil the vines be hunted to death, and your tender grapes shall give a good smell. Cry to God, beloved brethren and sisters, for

strong faith to, "Read your title clear to mansions in the skies." Great holiness must spring from great faith. Faith is the root, obedience the branch, and if the root decays the branch cannot flourish. Ask to know that Christ is yours, and that you are His, for here you will find a fountain to water your consecration and make it yield fruit to Christ's service. Some professors act as if this were not the case. They foment their doubts and fears in order to perfect holiness. I have known Christians, when they are conscious that they have not lived as they ought to live, begin to doubt their interest in Christ, and as they say, humble themselves in order to reach after fuller sanctification of life. That is to say, they starve themselves in order to grow strong, they throw their gold out of the window in order to become rich, they pull up the very foundation stone of their house to make it stand secure.

Beloved believer, sinner as you are, backslider as you are, still believe in Jesus, let not a sense of sin weaken your faith in Him. He died for sinners, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Cling to that cross still, the more furious the storm the more need of the life-buoy—never leave it, but make your hold firmer. Confide alone in the virtue of that precious blood, for thus only will you slay your sins and advance in holiness. If you say within your heart, "Jesus cannot save such a one as I am, if I had marks and evidences of being God's child, I could then trust Jesus," you have cast away your shield, and the darts of the tempter will wound you terribly. Cling to Jesus even when it is a question of whether you have a grain of grace in your hearts. Believe that He died for you, not because you are consecrated or sanctified, but died for you as sinners, and saves you as sinners. Never lose your simple trust in the Crucified, for only by the blood of the Lamb can you overcome sin and be made fit for the Lord's work.

Note in reading these words, how this covenant is revealed to Abram peculiarly as *a work of divine power*. Note the run of the passage, "I will make my covenant between me and you." "I will make you fruitful." "I will establish my covenant." "I will give unto you." "I will be your God," and so on. Oh! those glorious "wills" and "shalls."

Brethren, you cannot serve the Lord with a perfect heart until first your faith gets a grip of the divine "will" and "shall." If my salvation rests upon this poor, puny arm, upon my resolves, my integrity, and my faithfulness, it is shipwrecked forever, but if my eternal salvation rests upon the great arm which bears up the universe, if my soul's safety is altogether in that hand that wheels the stars along, then blessed be His name, it is safe and well, and now, out of love to such a Savior I will serve Him with all my heart. I will spend and be spent for Him who has thus graciously undertaken for me. Mark this, brethren; be very clear about it, and ask to have the divine working made apparent to your soul, for that will help you to be consecrated to God.

Further, Abraham had a view of the covenant *in its everlastingness*. I do not remember that the word "everlasting" had been used before in reference to that covenant, but in this chapter we have it over and over again. "I will establish my covenant for an everlasting covenant." Here is one of those grand truths which many of the babes in grace have not as yet learned, namely, that the blessings of grace are blessings not given today to be taken back tomorrow, but eternal blessings.

The salvation which is in Christ Jesus is not a salvation which will belong to us for a few hours, while we are faithful to it, and will then be taken away, so that we shall be left to perish. God forbid, "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." "I am God," He says, "I change not: therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." When we put ourselves into the hands of Christ, we do not confide in a Savior who might allow us to be destroyed, but we rest in one who has said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

Instead of the doctrine of the security of the saints leading to negligence of life, you will find that on the contrary, where it is thoroughly well received in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, it begets such a holy confidence in God, such a flaming gratitude to Him, that it is one of the best incentives to consecration. Treasure up these thoughts, dear brethren, and if you would grow in grace and in conformity to Christ, endeavor to perceive your personal interest in the covenant, the divine power which guarantees its fulfillment, and the everlastingness of its character.

In considering the nature of this consecration, I would observe next, that *they who are consecrated to God are regarded as new men*. The new manhood is indicated by the change of name—he is called no longer Abram, but Abraham, and his wife is no longer Sarai, but Sarah. You, beloved, are new creatures in Christ Jesus. The root and source of all consecration to God lies in regeneration. We are “born again,” a new and incorruptible seed is placed within us which “lives and abides forever.” The name of Christ is named upon us, we are no longer called sinners and unjust, but we become the children of God by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Note further that *the nature of this consecration was set forth to Abraham by the rite of circumcision*. It would not be at all fitting or decorous for us to enter into any detail as to that mysterious rite, but it will suffice to say that the rite of circumcision signified the taking away of the filthiness of the flesh. We have the apostle Paul's own interpretation of circumcision in the verses which we read just now in his epistle to the Colossians. Circumcision indicated to the seed of Abraham that there was a defilement of the flesh in man which must forever be taken away, or man would remain impure, and out of covenant with God.

Now, beloved, there must be, in order to our sanctification to Christ, a giving up, a painful relinquishing of things as dear to us as right eyes and right hands. There must be a denying of the flesh with its affections and lusts. We must mortify our members. There must be self-denial if we are to enter into the service of God. The Holy Spirit must pass sentence of death and cutting away upon the passions and tendencies of corrupt humanity. Much must perish which nature would cherish, but die it must, because grace abhors it.

Notice, with regard to circumcision, that it was peremptorily ordained that it should be practiced on every male of the race of Abraham, and if it were neglected death followed. So the giving up of sin, the giving up of the body of the filth of the flesh is necessary to every believer. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Even the babe in Christ is as much to see death written upon the body of the filth of the flesh as a man who, like Abraham, has reached advanced years and come to maturity in spiritual things. There is no distinction here between the one and the other. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” and where a supposed grace does not take away from us a love of sin, it is not the grace of God at all, but the presumptuous conceit of our own vain natures.

It is often said that the ordinance of baptism is analogous to the ordinance of circumcision; I will not controvert that point, although the statement may be questioned. But supposing it to be, let me urge upon every believer here to see to it that in his own soul he realizes the spiritual meaning both of circumcision and baptism, and then consider the outward rites, for the thing signified is vastly more important than the sign.

Baptism sets forth far more than circumcision. Circumcision is putting away of the filth of the flesh, but baptism is the burial of the flesh altogether. Baptism does not say, “Here is something to be taken away,” but everything is dead, and must be buried with Christ in His tomb, and the man must rise anew with Christ. Baptism teaches us that by death we pass into the new life. As Noah's ark, passing through the death of the old world, emerged into a new world, even so, by a like figure, baptism sets forth our salvation by the resurrection of Christ, a baptism of which Peter says, it is “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.”

In baptism, the man avows to himself and others that he comes by death into newness of life, according to the words of the Holy Spirit, “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead.” The most valuable point is the spiritual meaning, and on that we experience what it is to be dead to the world, to be dead and buried with Christ, and then to be risen with Him.

Still, brethren, Abraham was not allowed to say, “If I get the spiritual meaning, I can do without the outward rite.” He might have objected to that rite on a thousand grounds a great deal more strong than any which the hesitating have urged against baptism, but he first accepted the rite, as well as the thing which it intended, and straightaway was circumcised, and so I exhort you, men and brethren, to be

obedient to the precept upon baptism, as well as attentive to the truth which it signifies. If you are indeed buried with Christ, and risen with Him, despise not the outward and instructive sign by which this is set forth. "Well," says one, "a difficulty suggests itself as to your views," for an argument is often drawn from this chapter, "that inasmuch as Abraham must circumcise all his seed, we ought to baptize all our children."

Now, observe the type and interpret it not according to prejudice, but according to Scripture. In the type the seed of Abraham are circumcised, you draw the inference that all typified by the seed of Abraham ought to be baptized, and I do not cavil at the conclusion, but I ask you, who are the true seed of Abraham? Paul answers in Romans 9:8, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." As many as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, are Abraham's seed. Whether eight days old in grace, or more or less, every one of Abraham's seed has a right to baptism.

But I deny that the unregenerate, whether children or adults, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. The Lord will, we trust, call many of them by His grace, but as yet they are "heirs of wrath, even as others." At such time as the Spirit of God shall sow the good seed in their hearts, they are of Abraham's believing seed, but they are not so while they live in ungodliness and unbelief, or are as yet incapable of faith or repentance. The answering person in type to the seed of Abraham is, by the confession of everybody, the believer, and the believer ought, seeing he is buried with Christ spiritually, to avow that fact, by his public baptism in water, according to the Savior's own precept and example. "Thus," said Christ, "it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," as He went down to the River Jordan.

At the Jordan was He sprinkled? Why go down to a river to be sprinkled? Why went He *down into the water* to be sprinkled? "Us." Did He mean babes? Was He a babe? Was not He, when He said "us," speaking of the faithful who are in Him? "And thus it becomes *us* to fulfill all righteousness," that is, all His saints. But how does baptism fulfill all righteousness? Typically thus—it is the picture of the whole work of Christ. There is His immersion in suffering, there is His death and burial, there is His coming up out of the water represents His resurrection, His coming up the banks of Jordan represents His ascension. It is a typical representation of how He fulfilled all righteousness, and how the saints fulfilled it in Him.

But, brethren, I did not intend to go so far into the outward sign, because my soul's deepest desire is this, that as Abraham by the outward sign was taught that there was a putting away of the filth of flesh, which must be, or death must follow, so are we taught by baptism that there is an actual death to the world, and a resurrection with Christ, which must be to every believer, however old or however young, or he has not part or lot in the matter of consecration to God, or, indeed, in salvation itself.

III. I have a third head, but my time is gone, and, therefore, just these hints. THE RESULTS OF SUCH A CONSECRATION.

Immediately after God's appearing to Abraham, his consecration was manifest, first, *in his prayer for his family*. "O that Ishmael might live before you!" Men of God, if you are indeed the Lord's, and feel that you are His, begin now to intercede for all who belong to you. Never be satisfied unless they are saved too, and if you have a son, an Ishmael, concerning whom you have many fears and much anxiety, as you are saved yourself, never cease to groan out that cry, "O that Ishmael might live before you!"

The next result of Abraham's consecration was, that he *was most hospitable to his fellow men*. Look at the next chapter. He sits at the tent door, and three men come to him. The Christian is the best servant of humanity in a spiritual sense. I mean that for his Master's sake he endeavors to do good to the sons of men. He is of all men the first to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, and as much as lies in him to do good unto all men, especially unto such as are of the household of faith.

The third result was, *Abraham entertained the Lord Himself*, for among those three angels who came to his house was the King of kings, the infinite One. Every believer who serves his God does, as it were, give refreshment to the divine mind. I mean this, God took an infinite delight in the work of His dear

Son. He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and He takes a delight also in the holiness of all His people. Jesus sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied by the works of the faithful, and you, brethren, as Abraham entertained the Lord, do entertain the Lord Jesus with your patience and your faith, with your love and your zeal, when you are thoroughly consecrated to Him.

Once more, Abraham became *the great intercessor for others*. The next chapter is full of his pleadings for Sodom. He had not been able to plead before, but after circumcision, after consecration, he becomes the King's remembrancer, he is installed into the office of a priest, and he stands there crying, "Will you not save the city? Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?" O beloved, if we do but become consecrated to God, thoroughly so, as I have attempted feebly to describe, we shall become mighty with God in our pleadings. I believe one holy man is a greater blessing to a nation than a whole regiment of soldiers. Did not they fear more the prayers of John Knox than the arms of ten thousand men? A man who lives habitually near to God is like a great cloud forever dropping with fertile showers. This is the man who can say, "The earth is dissolved, I bear up the pillars thereof."

France had never seen so bloody a revolution had there been men of prayer to preserve her. England, amidst the commotions which make her rock to and fro, is held fast because prayer is put up incessantly by the faithful. The flag of old England is nailed to her mast, not by the hands of her sailors, but by the prayers of the people of God. These, as they intercede day and night, and as they go about their spiritual ministry, these are they for whom God spares nations, for whom He permits the earth still to exist, and when their time is over, and they are taken away, the salt being taken from the earth, then shall the elements dissolve with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, but not until He has caught away the saints with Christ into the air shall this world pass away. He will spare it for the righteous' sake.

Seek after the highest degree of sanctity, my dear brethren and sisters, seek for it, labor for it, and while you rest in faith alone for justification, be not slack concerning growth in grace, that the highest attainments be your ambition, and God grant them to you, for His Son's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 17, COLOSSIANS 2:10-15.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.